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SUBJECT: PURSUING THE U.S. AGENDA

REF: A. 07 VILNIUS 164

[¶](#)B. 06 VILNIUS 53

Classified By: Ambassador John Cloud for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

[¶](#)11. (C) SUMMARY/INTRODUCTION: One year ago, we laid out a plan to engage the Lithuanian government strategically to support key U.S. objectives, especially in mobilizing the government to support the Global War on Terror and to promote democracy in the former Soviet Union. With PM Gediminas Kirkilas' government now holding a (slim) majority and parliamentary elections coming up this fall (and presidential elections Spring 2009) we examine our progress to date and provide a plan to further advance our bilateral agenda in [¶](#)2008. End Summary/Introduction.

[¶](#)12. (C) In the past year, Embassy Vilnius has engaged intensively with the government on the issues that matter to us the most. We succeeded in convincing Lithuania to re-deploy a platoon to Iraq and to continue its PRT and SOF deployments in Afghanistan. Lithuania continues to work effectively to promote our democracy agenda in Belarus, Ukraine, Georgia and Moldova. We regularly press the government to move forward on difficult post-Holocaust issues and to improve the investment climate. The Ambassador met during the past year with every Cabinet member, and frequently consults with key decision makers, including President Adamkus, PM Kirkilas, Foreign Minister Vaitiekunas, and Defense Minister Olekas. Our ministry-specific work plans guide mission interactions with government leaders, and we track progress on the issues that matter to U.S. interests.

[¶](#)13. (C) Broadly speaking, our mission priorities are the same as in recent years:

- Support for U.S. initiatives within Europe and beyond
- Support for democracy at home and abroad
- Closer U.S.-Lithuanian economic ties
- Bilateral law enforcement cooperation
- Increasing public support for U.S. positions
- Improving embassy operating conditions

In contributing to global security and promoting democracy, Lithuania has consistently supported U.S. positions. However, within the EU, Lithuania is more reticent than we would like in supporting democracy and human rights outside of the region. In areas such as promotion of U.S. investment, encouraging transparency and tolerance, and cultivating Lithuania's next generation of leaders, however, we need to continue to press in this coming year and beyond. Below is our work plan, organized by major policy goal, for the engagement of government leaders and the pursuit of Mission objectives.

Active in Global War on Terror

¶4. (C) Our key priority remains maximizing Lithuania's contribution to global peace and security. Lithuania's leadership of a Provincial Reconstruction Team (PRT) in Ghor, Afghanistan continues to be its most significant contribution to global collective security. Lithuania has expanded its presence and responsibilities in Afghanistan, taking over all financial responsibility for the PRT in 2007 and has responded to NATO's call for more combat capability in the south by deplored its Special Operations Forces (SOF) to Zabul province. Besides making Lithuania a provider, rather than just a consumer of security, the experience of operating the PRT has helped drive Lithuania's defense transformation in ways that will make it a stronger NATO contributor in the future. Lithuania also made the difficult decision to re-deploy troops to Iraq and remain committed in Kosovo.

¶5. (C) In 2008, we plan to build on those past accomplishments by reinforcing political and public support for Lithuania's participation in these multinational operations. Our main challenge will be to ensure Lithuania stays engaged in Iraq. The Defense Minister has already announced that Lithuania will take an "operational pause" following the return of the current deployment in May and until after the autumn elections. Given the withdrawal of other European forces from Iraq, we are concerned such a "pause" will be hard to reverse. In Afghanistan, we will encourage the GOL to expand its capacity to deliver security by including a training element in its SOF deployment. We also intend to promote the GOL's continued development of niche capabilities within NATO, and to urge Parliament to provide adequate resources so it can pay both for foreign deployments and for defense transformation needs at home. We will use our limited IMET, FMS, FMF resources as efficiently as possible.

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Building democracy abroad...

¶6. (C) The government continued to champion freedom closer to home in 2007 through its commitment to the promotion of democracy and Western values within the former Soviet Union. President Adamkus consulted closely with us as he personally worked with the leaders of new democracies in the former Soviet space, especially in Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine. We worked with the Foreign Ministry and the President's staff to help them to de-escalate tensions in Georgia and help prepare for elections, and to encourage proportionate responses to what Lithuania and some of its neighbors view as Russian meddling in the region.

¶7. (C) This year, we will continue to encourage and support the GOL's active role in promoting democratic institutions and human rights in its neighbors in Eastern Europe and the Caucasus. We will work with the GOL to bolster its credibility within the European Union as an expert on democratic transformation in Eastern Europe as well as the (more touchy) issue of Russia-EU relations. We will continue to discourage impulses in some parts of the government to pursue an engagement strategy with Belarus's regime without consultation with us and the EU.

¶8. (C) Lithuania is devoted to democracy and human rights. Nevertheless, it tends to limit its support for these goals to its immediate neighborhood. As an EU member, Lithuania has the potential to promote these goals more globally. Last year, we succeeded in blunting an effort by some in Lithuania to recognize Cuba. This year, we will continue to encourage Lithuania to speak up on democracy and human rights issues whether in the Greater Middle East, Burma, Cuba, or elsewhere.

...and at Home

¶9. (SBU) We also want to help Lithuania develop a more mature and resilient political system domestically. Although Lithuania boasts a strong and active democracy and an independent (albeit, at times, irresponsible) media, areas of concern remain. In particular, Lithuania needs to tackle corruption, especially in the police force, develop a more responsive prosecutor general's office, and strengthen the Special Investigation Service, which is charged with investigating corruption but seldom brings significant cases.

Other blemishes on Lithuania's democratic record are intolerance and a reluctance to deal with the historical events that devastated Lithuania's once vibrant Jewish community. In 2008, a draft law on the restitution of Jewish communal property remains stalled. While we have succeeded in getting the GOL to take seriously Jewish objections to proposed development on the site of an historic Jewish cemetery, the government has dragged its feet and has not challenged the interests which prevent a resolution.

¶10. (SBU) In 2008, we will continue to emphasize these issues by speaking out in defense of civil society and euro-atlantic values. We will continue to confront intolerance by featuring that issue as a core theme of our speeches and outreach programs. We will push the government to reach a negotiated solution to concerns about developing the Snipiskes Jewish cemetery and to encourage the promulgation and enactment of a new law on the restitution of Jewish communal property confiscated since World War II.

Developing a Positive Agenda on Visa Policy

¶11. (SBU) Keeping Lithuania at the frontlines of the global struggle for freedom will require us to remain responsive to issues about which Lithuanians care. The most prominent of these remains Lithuania's desire for inclusion in the Visa Waiver Program (VWP). In 2007, we made significant progress in getting the GOL to address its responsibility to provide better data sharing on lost and stolen passports and on other security issues. The GOL sent a senior-level delegation to Washington in December 2007 to meet with State and Homeland Security to clarify the way forward. In 2008 we will continue to work with the GOL and DHS to create the conditions under which the VWP will be possible for Lithuania, and anticipate hosting DHS teams in the coming months to work with the Lithuanian government. We will also undertake a public relations program to educate Lithuanian citizens and officials on what exactly the VWP includes and what it does not.

Promote U.S. Economic Interests

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¶12. (SBU) The U.S. role in the Lithuanian economy remains underdeveloped and we hope to change that. We will actively engage the government in areas most promising for U.S. investment, like energy, and urge the GOL to ensure that the tender for a planned new nuclear power plant is transparent, giving U.S. companies a fair opportunity to compete. We will continue our efforts to energize the AmCham to be a more effective advocate for investment and creating the preconditions for increased investment. We will also continue to press the GOL to change the residency law which prohibits dependents of U.S. residents in Lithuania, including investors and businesspeople, from joining them in Lithuania for two years.

¶13. (SBU) We have been disappointed by the limits (largely due to funding and staffing shortages) of regional support by other agencies, but will continue to try to engage our partner FCS post in Warsaw to encourage U.S. business

visitors and private trade missions to Eastern Europe to include Lithuania in their itineraries. We will also team with U.S. businesses to help them win their share of the commercially significant deals that come up for bid this year.

Support for Law Enforcement

¶14. (C) In 2007 we made substantial progress in our efforts to support Lithuanian law enforcement, as the FBI and other law enforcement agencies intensified their activity here. In the current year we plan to expand our training initiatives with law enforcement officials, with a view to make the national police and the GOL's anti-corruption service more effective and active partners. We will also continue our joint work with the GOL to combat the root causes and mitigate the effects of trafficking in persons, public corruption, cyber and organized crime.

Getting out the Word

¶15. (SBU) Underlying all our goals is an effective public relations strategy to generate broad public support for U.S. policy goals in Lithuania and elsewhere. A recent poll sponsored by the Public Affairs Section suggests that Lithuanians' approval of the United States and support for Lithuania's contributions to U.S. initiatives abroad is directly and positively related to whether the respondent has met an American. The Ambassador has accelerated his travel program to reach all of Lithuania's larger cities and remote communities that receive official visits less frequently.

¶16. (SBU) The Ambassador has also stepped up his visibility in the press, with interviews in prominent magazines and dailies, and on television. He and his Mission colleagues have also been active in promoting post's cultural programs. During 2008, we will continue with our post speaker's bureau, which involves the entire embassy community in speaking to audiences all over Lithuania about various topics -- from science and education in the United States to foreign policy and democracy building abroad. We will also work with private groups on both sides of the Atlantic to expand the range and incidence of U.S.-Lithuanian youth exchanges.

Effective Embassy Operating Conditions

¶17. (SBU) In 2007, we moved into the new American Center, allowing the public affairs section to relocate to the embassy compound, and received funding for the upgrade of the archaic, stained, and crumbling chancery building. In 2008, we will begin renovation of the chancery. We will continue to work with the Department to try to remedy the fire safety and anti-terror vulnerabilities of our building that have been allowed to continue in the past.

¶18. (SBU) Our main personnel challenge will be to retain our best FSN personnel in the face of high wage growth on the local economy. We have not received funds for an FSN wage increase since March 2004. In addition, we need to increase on-line and other training opportunities for our best FSNS to ensure that we can empower them in the future.

Conclusion

¶19. (C) Lithuania remains one of our nation's most loyal and consistent allies on many issues that matter to us. In the

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world's most dangerous places, Lithuania still stands

shoulder to shoulder with the United States. The above work plan outlines our strategy for preserving the strong friendship we enjoy here, for ensuring the continued support of GOL on key foreign policy goals, and for tackling issues of concern that affect U.S. interests in Lithuania. We believe the strategy outlined here will yield an even stronger and more durable bilateral relationship in 2008.

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